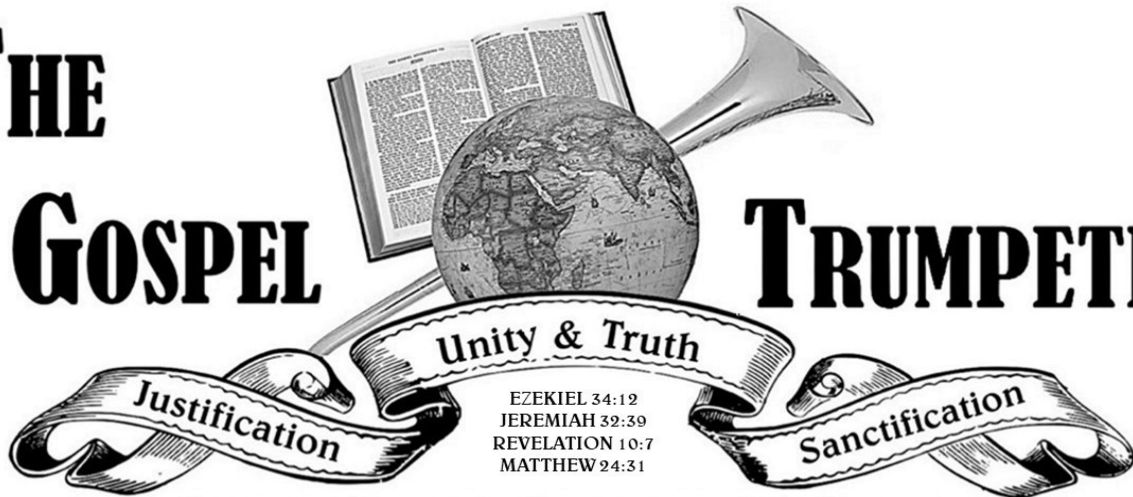


THE

GOSPEL

TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 54 April 2024 No. 4

“Except these
ABIDE IN THE SHIP,
ye cannot be
saved.”

Acts 27:31



"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark, Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however, it is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the expenses being paid by the local congregation.

PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:
Roger L. Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055
Email: pastor@godsacres.us
Phone: 740-344-2543

Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312
Websites: GodsAcres.org & GospelTrumpeter.com
Email: subscribe@godsacres.us

This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach the world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding traditions of men that have no Biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

A personal God (John 4:24)
A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
Salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21)
The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3)
Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
The ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:1-17;
1 Corinthians 11:23-34)
Eternal life (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43)
The Trinity (1 John 5:7-8)

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

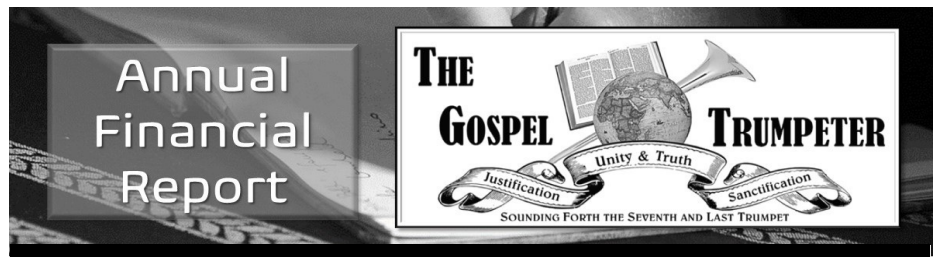
Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
Bible name of the church (Acts 20:28; Galatians 1:13;
John 17:11)

We reserve the right to edit and/or decline materials for any reason. We are not responsible for unsolicited materials.

CONTENTS

There Is Safety in the Midst of the Storm	3
Wine Is a Mocker	8
Statement of Condition	14
Especially for Young People	15
My Testimony	19
Thoughts From God's Word	19
Different Agencies and Aspects of Sanctification (Part 3)	20
Spring Camp Meeting Ad	26
Upcoming Meetings	27

Vol. 54 April 2024 No. 4



WORKERS TOGETHER

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

As I recently walked through the door of *The Gospel Trumpeter* office, my mind envisioned the tireless work that has taken place within those walls—a beacon of light for fifty-three years. I looked around and saw many photos that revealed memories of devoted saints working together in the unity of the Spirit. As I allowed my mind to go back and mentally visualize, a beautiful picture formed of those following Jesus' commandment to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The concrete floors paint a picture of years gone by—footsteps that have worn a path leading from machine to machine, weaving through the many stacks of paper by those who sacrificed their time and used their talents to ensure each issue went out promptly. Thank the Lord, there are saints following in those footsteps, and the work flourishes today!

A world map displays the many countries where *The Gospel Trumpeter* has been mailed in an effort to proclaim the Gospel message. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Another year has transpired, and *The Gospel Trumpeter* workers deeply covet the prayers of our readers. Brother Roger L. Decker carries a great burden, along with the saints here in Newark, Ohio, to fulfill Paul's words to the Ephesians—"that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." What a calling this is! The sole desire is to reach the lost and encourage the church worldwide. We ask our readers to pray about how they may help with the financial expense of this missionary endeavor. When we become workers together, we see God work in a greater way.

The reward of helping a lost soul find their way to God's saving grace is far-reaching, more than one could imagine. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." May you be blessed to know that your prayers and financial support are helping shine the light of this beautiful Gospel into some of the world's most remote areas. What a blessing to be a part of the furtherance of the Apostle Paul's message: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

We sincerely wish to thank everyone who has prayed and selflessly given. May God bless you all!

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

THERE IS SAFETY IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM



Brother Roger L. Decker

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

We read the word *abide* at least eight times in our Scripture text. It comes from the Greek word *menó*, which means "to stay, abide, continue to be present, remain, and dwell." Jesus said we will bring forth much fruit if we abide in Him. There is safety in Christ. Jesus is no longer in the corporeal body, but the church is His spiritual body. There is safety in abiding in the church, the body of Christ. Many have shipwrecked in their experience because they did not stay in the church and abide as Jesus instructed.

Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:18-20, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." These two men taught false doctrine. Second Timothy 2:16-18 says: "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."

Paul said some "have made shipwreck." They are stranded away from the truth. Trials will come, but if you abide or stay in Christ and His Word, God will

see you through the storms of life.

Acts 27:1-12 states: "And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

"And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

"Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast [the Day of Atonement] was now already past, Paul admonished them, And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth

toward the south west and north west." In other words, it was a favorable place to stay.

The Fierce Storm at Sea

These verses of Scripture refer to the Apostle Paul's last journey. By this time, he was an experienced traveler on a ship at sea in a fierce storm. The Jewish Day of Atonement was in the first half of October. According to the navigational practices of the time, sailing was doubtful after September and considered impossible by November. The ships they sailed on did not have a sextant, an instrument used in navigation, or a compass to guide them. They had no help in finding their way in dark and cloudy weather.

Paul advised staying for the winter at Fair Havens. Commentators say the ship was considered a cargo ship from Alexandria. The owner or contractor was bringing a cargo of corn to Rome. The centurion was the senior officer on board and had the final say. Even though Paul was a prisoner, they allowed him to speak, but paid no attention to what he said. The centurion rejected Paul's advice.

Fair Havens was not a good harbor because it was not close to a town big enough for the crew to stay in for the winter. It was subject to winds and bad weather. The contractor wanted to sail farther along the coast to a larger harbor with a bigger town to winter in. An unexpected south wind made the plan look easy. In other words, the winds were favorable. Once they started sailing, a strong northeast wind came upon them. The wind was so strong, they lost control of the ship and were at the mercy of the waves. They threw the extra cargo overboard to lighten the ship. Terror gripped them, and they began to lose hope.

Jonah went through a similar

predicament. Jonah 1:5 states: "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep." When the storm comes, things are thrown overboard when you lose control of the ship. Acts 27:15 says, "And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive." They could not control the ship, so they let it go to the mercy of the sea. The strong winds tossed the ship from one direction to another. It was dark, and they could not see where they were going.

Acts 27:21 says, "But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss." Paul reminded them they should have listened and taken his advice to stay where they were.

Verses 22-26 read: "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." Twice, Paul said to "be of good cheer." They were laboring to control the ship and had been without food for quite some time. Paul trusted God to bring them through.

The ship was in danger of being destroyed. Commentators say these cargo ships were as large as 140 feet long and 36 feet wide, with a draft of 33 feet. They carried material such as

corn and supplies across the ocean. Their large size had many disadvantages in the storm. The bow and the stern were the same, except the stern swept up like a gooseneck. They had no rudder as modern ships have. Two great paddles from the stern on each side directed the ship but were hard to steer. They only had one mast with one square sail made of linen or stitched hides. With only one large sail, the ship could not sail into the wind, and the single mast put tremendous strain on the ship's timbers that held it together. They were in a terrible peril.

Stay in the Ship

Acts 27:27-30 reads, "But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship."

Paul, who was the prisoner, became the captain. He was the only man who had any courage left in him. The seamen were about to flee out of the ship. They had let down a boat on the side and cast out anchors to hold the ship. As some men were about to abandon the ship and attempt to make it to the shore, we read in verse 31, "Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." After Paul warned the

Many have jumped ship and found the waves and turmoil of this world are too much to handle.



men to stay in the ship, the soldiers cut the ropes holding the boat to the vessel and let it go. There was no more escape.

Verses 32-38 state: "Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen [276] souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea."

The ship was drifting across the Adriatic Sea in the middle of the night. The sailors could not see, but they suspected they were near land. They feared the ship would be cast upon the rocks, so they dropped the anchors. Fearing they were too close to the rocks, they planned to abandon the ship and get into the boat, but Paul said to stay in the ship.

The men went fourteen days without eating. They were battling the storm. Paul urged them to take some food for their health. They had emptied the cargo into the sea. They had

given up hope of controlling the ship. The ship tossed whichever way the wind blew. Some of those winds were like a typhoon. They were whirling winds. The ship was at the mercy of the storm, and they were in darkness.

Hearing the breakers of a distant shore, they put out the anchors. They did not want the ship to go any farther into the rocks. Paul knew God would do His part, but he also knew the men were weak. They had been fasting and fighting the storm for fourteen days. He told them to eat so they could get strength. They were going to need it. Paul encouraged those sailors and merchants and assured them God was still in control.

Abide in the Body of Christ

Christian friend, do not worry about what is going on around you. God is still in control. If you do not stay in the body of Christ, you are asking for trouble. Sometimes, words are spoken against congregations of the Church of God. Do not let that upset you. Matthew 12:34 says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Some people have wrong things in their hearts, and eventually, they will come out. They have to justify themselves. Do not battle with them. Stay in Christ. Abide in Him, and let His Word abide in you.

Too many have jumped ship only to find the waves and turmoil of this world are too much to handle. Paul said "except these abide in the ship." Stay in Christ, or you cannot be saved. Many children and grandchildren have no confidence in the church because of those who have left. Whenever some people see something they dislike, they jump out. Their children think

the Church of God is a church among churches. Stay in the body of Christ where God has put you. I have no desire to leave the church. Some have made moves, which affect their children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Now, they attend sectarian churches.

You cannot challenge God and do your own thing. God's Word is true. If you seek "greener pastures," God will let you find them. Some people were steadfast, but now they have changed their minds. They have developed a track record—they are here awhile, there awhile, but they never unpack their suitcase, so to speak. If things do not go their way, they move somewhere else. The Bible says we are to be "stedfast, unmoveable" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Jesus said, "Abide in me" (John 15:4). Not everything will be smooth when you choose to serve God instead of the god of this world. Some think trials, temptations, and storms will cease when they come to Christ. That is not true. I once asked my pastor, Brother Emerson Wilson, "Why am I having a worse time now than before I served God?"

He said, "Because you have changed kingdoms, and the devil wants you back."

Matthew 5:43-45 reads: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Troubles come on the just and the unjust, but there is a difference. Those who abide in Christ are in a place of safety. Paul said to stay in the ship.

Psalms 78:53 says, "And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." Proverbs 1:33 reads, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." Proverbs 3:21-26 states: "My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken."

Jeremiah 33:15-16 says: "In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness." God has provided a place of safety for His children. He wants His people to stay with Him. We must abide in the spiritual body, the Church of God.

"This Is a Hard Saying"

John 6:59-61 reads: "These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?" What Jesus said was offensive to some. Who can take His Word without getting offended?

Verses 62-65 state: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man

ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

The disciples found the discourse of Jesus to be hard. The Greek word for "hard" is *skleros*, which means "hard to accept." It is not hard to *understand*, but hard to *accept*. The disciples knew Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. No one can live this Christian life and face eternity without submitting to Jesus Christ. It is not intellectual difficulty which keeps men from becoming Christians. Most people understand what they need to do. What keeps people from coming to Christ is the moral demand. Christ demands an act of surrender in accepting Him as the final authority, and He also demands a moral standard of the highest level. Many refuse Christ not because He puzzles their intellect but because He challenges their living.

Jesus knows many will reject Him with hostility. No man can accept Jesus unless the Spirit of God calls him. You have the right to resist the Spirit of God. You do not have to be saved. The Spirit of God can move upon you, challenge your thought life, and draw you to Him, but you have the right to say, "No, I want to stay exactly the way I am." There is coming a day when that right will be taken away from you when you end up in a lost eternity. You can hold on to your rights, but when Jesus says, "I never knew you," you will know God has the last word.

In these Scriptures, the tone of the crowd had changed and

hatred was taking hold. The crowds were no longer coming to Him, saying, "Heal me, Jesus"; they were defecting from Him. John 6:66-67 says: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" Some turned their backs and walked no more with Him. They drifted away for different reasons. Some saw Jesus heading to the Cross, so they bailed out. They were what we might call "fair-weather Christians." They were on the upward way as long as He supplied them with healings and miracles.

At the sign of the Cross, people left Jesus because they wanted no part of something they felt would destroy them. Many people come to Jesus to get something from Him. When they have to suffer, they are ready to quit. Remember, if you follow Jesus, there is a cross to bear. In Luke 14:26-27, Jesus said to the multitudes who were following Him: "If any man [singular] come to me, and hate not [the word *hate* simply means 'love less'] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters [it gets closer], yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

John said many of Christ's disciples went back and left Jesus. If people can leave Jesus, Paul, and the other Apostles, do not be shocked when ones leave us. They "walked no more with him." What a sad statement! Many leave the safety of the church and try to make it on their own, but they are open prey to the devil. There is safety within the church. There are many things to help you overcome the enemy. The Word of God is preached, and His Spirit calls out to convert and guide you. You

have brothers and sisters in Christ to help you and the grace and strength only Christ can give.

Weathering the Storm

People who leave the church or jump ship think they are missing out on the storm but wind up in a worse condition. Many become broken, lonely, depressed, discouraged, bound with vices, and do not know where to turn. Stay with Jesus. Abide in Him even when it gets rough and



rocky. God will take care of you. Things will smooth out if you stay with Him. The Apostle Paul stayed with Christ no matter the conditions, good or bad. He remained faithful until they removed his head.

Let us read the testimony of the Apostle Paul. (We think we have it rough.) Second Corinthians 11:23-28 reads: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one [they were never to go over forty, so they subtracted one].

"Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In

journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren [which is one of the worst]; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

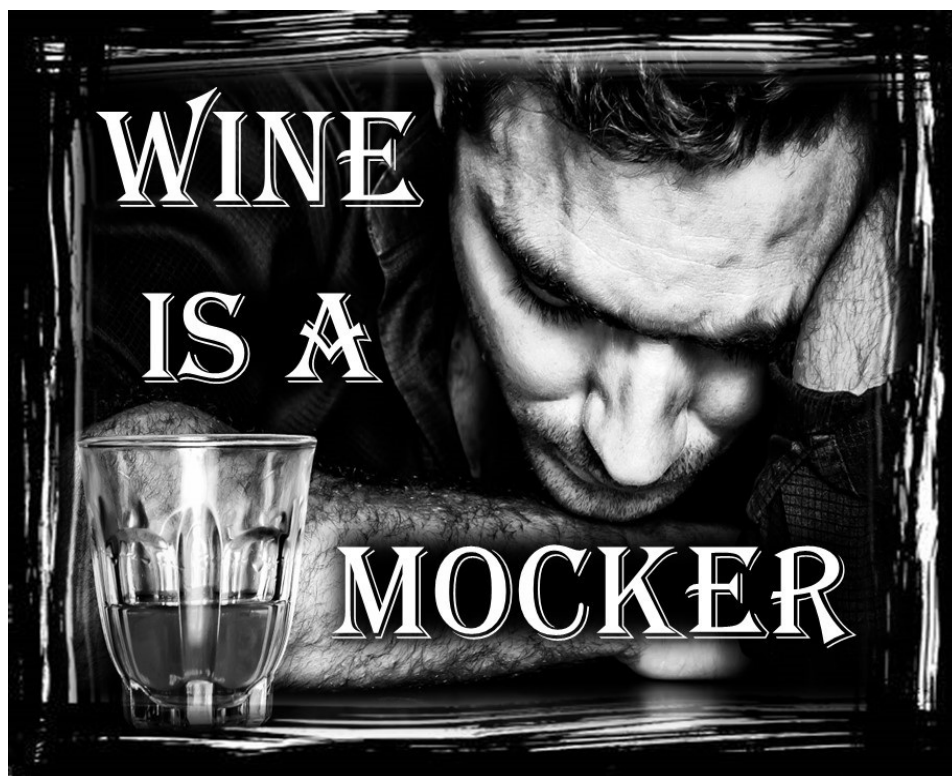
The Apostle Paul endured trials and afflictions, yet he stayed faithful. He weathered the storm and was a true follower of Jesus Christ. The storms did not deter him, slow him down, or shut him up. Most of what he wrote to us was written from prison. God was always there with him.

God was with Joseph all through his life and exalted him to be the second-in-command in Egypt. His brothers sold him as a slave. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20). Things that happen to God's people, God will turn them for good. It will spur the church on to greater heights and deeper depths than she has ever known. Do not let trials deter you from serving God.

If you are going through a storm and do not know how you will make it, get real close to God. Do what the Apostle Paul said and obey God. Do not jump ship. Paul was confident God would do what He said He would. Stay with Christ. There are many things we do not know, but keep your confidence in the One who does know, and that is Jesus Christ.

(Compact Disc TR-3038)

Brother Roger L. Decker is the pastor of the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Brother Larry Dishman

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Proverbs 23:29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.

35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

We live in an age of moral permissiveness. Many popular preachers, including television and radio preachers, believe in social drinking and will not condemn it. According to the Bible, God is against social drinking. Wine and strong drink have plagued mankind from the beginning of time. It has taken a terrible toll on our society and has become a major problem for young people.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, in 2018, an estimated 401,000 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 had alcohol use disorder. Also, 7.1 million young people between the ages of 12 and 20 reported they drank alcohol beyond "just a few sips." Approximately 4,300 deaths are attributed to underage drinking every year. Of these, around 1,600 are due to motor vehicle crashes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The leading cause of death among teenagers is driving while

intoxicated. Suicide deaths among teenagers are often associated with alcohol abuse.

The greatest influence on young people is the parental patterns they witness from an early age in the home. Unfortunately, youthful alcohol abuse is rooted in the home, and the solution must come from there. Change begins in the home. Mom and Dad, you are to be an example to your children, and the best weapon you have to protect your children is the Word of God. You should "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Jesus Did Not Make Alcoholic Wine

Two types of wine are mentioned in the Bible: that which is squeezed from the grape, or simple grape juice, and the fermented grape drink. The Bible is against the fermented wine. The word *wine* in the Bible can refer to either fermented or unfermented grape juice. Wine is a general term, and the surrounding context of each verse will tell what kind of wine the Scripture is talking about. No one can get drunk on new wine because grape juice does not have an intoxicating nature.

The following verses prove the word *wine* can mean fresh grape juice from the fruit of the vine: Deuteronomy 11:14; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Nehemiah 13:15; and Isaiah 16:10. Proverbs 3:10 says, "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Presses do not burst out with intoxicating wine. Isaiah 65:8 states, "Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." You cannot get fermented wine from

a cluster of grapes.

Some people will quote 1 Timothy 5:23 to try to prove they need to drink wine. It says, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." Most doctors will not recommend wine for the stomach. A wise doctor will tell you to stop drinking alcoholic beverages. When the Apostle Paul said to "use a little wine," he was talking about unfermented wine. The water Jesus turned into wine in John, Chapter 2, was not intoxicating. People use these verses to justify their desire to drink alcohol without studying the Scriptures. The people at the wedding at Cana were actually drinking fresh grape juice.

There are at least five reasons Jesus did not make or drink alcoholic wine. The first is found in Leviticus 10:9-11, which was God's command to the priests: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses."

Hebrews 2:17 tells us Jesus is "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." We can expect Christ to obey all Scriptures dealing with the priest's office because He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). If Jesus drank alcoholic wine, He would have disobeyed these verses and been disqualified from teaching the statutes of the Lord. Proverbs 31:4-5 gives us the second reason: "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they

drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." Christ obeyed these verses because He is the Prince of princes and the King of kings.

Jesus Did Not Cast a Stumbling Block

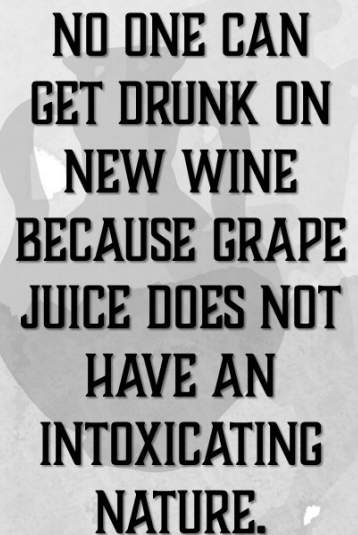
Jesus did not come to mock or deceive people, which is the third reason we know He did not turn the water into an intoxicating beverage. Our Scripture text says in Proverbs 20:1, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Christ did not come to cast a stumbling block before anyone, which is the fourth reason. Romans 14:21 reads, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

Experts who have studied the problem of alcoholism have learned that some people cannot handle any amount of alcohol, while others can drink one or two social drinks and stop. They do not know why some people keep drinking once they get started. In any given group of people, young or old, you do not know who could end up an alcoholic once they begin drinking alcohol.

Many churches serve intoxicating wine at the Lord's Supper. What a shame it would be for a person who is a potential slave to alcohol to get his first taste of wine while supposedly observing the Lord's Supper! How horrible to be the one causing someone to go down the road of misery to an alcoholic's grave! I certainly would not want my children to get their first taste of alcohol at a family meal or in a church service. We can be absolutely sure Christ did not come to cause anyone to stumble.

Habakkuk 2:15 gives us the fifth reason Jesus would not vio-

late His own rules. It reads, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" Jesus was well acquainted with the Scriptures because John, Chapter 1, says He is the Word. Christ did not come to violate the Scriptures but "to fulfil" the Scriptures (Matthew 5:17). Jesus did not make alcoholic wine and give it to those people at the wedding in Cana. Our Lord would not have done something associated with evil practices, as described in Habakkuk 2:15. For the same reason, Christians will not drink or engage in selling alcoholic beverages.



**NO ONE CAN
GET DRUNK ON
NEW WINE
BECAUSE GRAPE
JUICE DOES NOT
HAVE AN
INTOXICATING
NATURE.**

The good wine was the freshest. Jesus turned the water into the freshest fruit of the vine, the very best they had ever had. I cannot fathom Jesus turning water into fermented wine and saying: "Here, let me give you something to mock and deceive you. It will cause sorrow, contention, babbling, wounds, and redness of eyes. It will bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. Your eyes will behold strange women, and you will utter perverse things."

The Deceptive Nature of Alcohol

God forbade the priests from drinking wine. Again, Leviticus 10:9 reads, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations." In this dispensation of time, we all are kings and priests. First Peter 2:9 states, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Dear one, if you are bound by alcohol or drugs, there is deliverance in Jesus Christ. You can be set free from the habits of life. Some Christians were once bound by cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs, but God changed them and made them new creatures. God is no respecter of persons. What He has done for others, He will do for you. You can be a free man or woman, saved by the grace of God.

Several years ago, Ann Landers, a popular advice columnist, printed a column about the deceptive nature of alcohol called "Positively Negative." It read:

We drank for joy and became miserable.

We drank for sociability and became argumentative.

We drank for sophistication and became obnoxious.

We drank for friendship and became enemies.

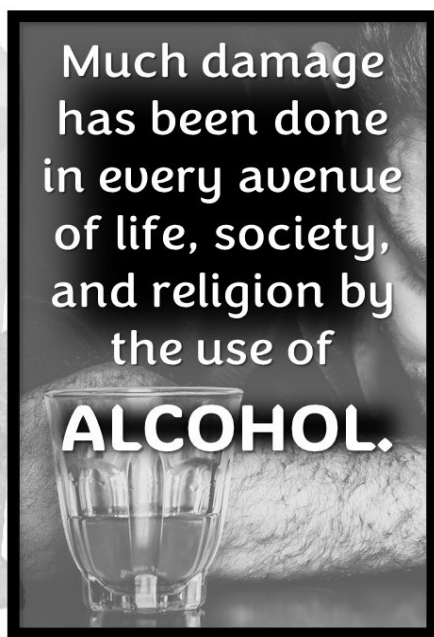
We drank to help us sleep and awakened exhausted.

We drank to gain strength, and it made us weaker.

We drank for exhilaration and ended up depressed.

We drank for "medical reasons" and acquired health problems.

We drank to help us calm down and ended up with the shakes.



We drank to get more confidence and became afraid.

We drank to make conversation flow more easily, and the words came out slurred and incoherent.

We drank to diminish our problems and saw them multiply.

We drank to feel heavenly and ended up feeling like hell.

The wise man warned us in our Scripture text not to treat this substance lightly. Much damage has been done in every avenue of life, society, and religion by the use of alcohol. One of the most dangerous drugs in America is alcohol. The reason it is so dangerous is because of its availability, acceptance, and the horrible effect it has on those who drink it. Almost every person has been affected in some way by someone who is or has been bound by alcohol.

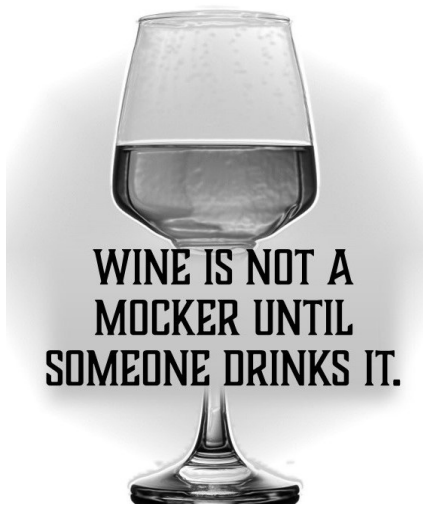
There is a monster loose in the land, and this monster is causing our nation's cities to crumble, many homes to unravel and come apart at the seams, and lives and hearts to be crushed. It is bringing spiritual, moral, mental, and physical disaster. It is causing highways to become a slaughterhouse. It is "King Alcohol."

Do Not Be Fooled Into Drinking Wine

Friend, you need to know what the Bible has to say about alcoholic beverages because society tells you it is okay to drink them as long as you do not get drunk. That is a lie from the pits of hell. Families are destroyed, marriage vows are broken, children are left in the wreckage, and holiness is abandoned because of alcohol consumption. It shatters friendships, and it causes family violence and death on the roads. What an utter waste of a once productive life when the draw of alcohol slowly saps a person.

I work closely with the missions in Mobile, Alabama, and Mississippi. Many of those dear men once had good jobs. One man had a nice home, a business, a wife, and a family until alcohol got hold of him, and he lost everything. At least sixty men are in one mission at all times. Some were licensed electricians, plumbers, doctors, and lawyers until they became involved with alcohol and drugs.

Young person, do not play around with these vices because of what they will do. Job said in Job 31:1, "I made a covenant with mine eyes." That Scripture means more than just refraining from looking and lusting after other men or women. The wise man said in Proverbs 23:31, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Make a covenant with your eyes to avoid looking at the wine in the cup. Daniel was a young man who loved God and consecrated and dedicated his life to God. Daniel 1:8 reads, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."



Wine will defile you. John the Baptist would never drink alcohol. Luke 1:15 reads, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, [Do you want to be great in the sight of the Lord? Here is one way you can be.] and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." A Holy Ghost-filled individual says no to wine and strong drink.

No one likes to be made fun of, but wine will make fun of you. Years ago, while holding a revival in Niles, Michigan, a young woman came forward during a great moving of God's Spirit. She wept and said: "When I was fifteen, I went to a party. They said, 'Just drink a little; it won't hurt you.'" It was her first experience with alcohol, and she became drunk and passed out. Two months later, she found out she was pregnant, and it happened on the night of the party. She thought she was still a virgin and had no idea someone had taken advantage of her.

You must be wise and avoid anything that will shame you or inflame your passions. If you arrogantly presume you can handle alcohol, you are a fool. To mock someone is to ridicule or make a fool of them. Wine in a bottle or glass remains quiet and will not ridicule or shame any-

one. Wine is not a mocker until someone drinks it. Drinking wine can make you drunk, which causes you to lose control of your basic motor skills. You may think you can handle it, but it will make a fool of you. Even if you have the best intentions for wisdom, wine will make a joke of your reputation.

Alcohol and wine are deceptive in the way people advocate them. They say, "Drinking just a little will not hurt you." Most everyone will admit that too much wine is bad. Even liquor companies tell people not to drink and drive, but they still insist a small amount will not hurt. That is deceptive because many people across our country are in rehab facilities today because they started out drinking a little and thought they would not hurt anyone.

The Consequences of Drinking Alcohol

Experts say that every individual is different. It can take only an ounce of alcohol to affect one person, while more is necessary for another. You could be the one affected by just one ounce. People react to alcohol differently based on the amount of food they eat and other factors. The devil will lie and tell you a little will not hurt you.

Consider what alcohol did to Lot. Genesis 19:31-36 states: "And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the

younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father." What a shame!

Proverbs 23:29 lists some undesirable consequences of alcohol consumption: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions [wine causes some people to be contentious and others to become argumentative]? who hath babbling [those influenced by alcohol rarely make sense]? who hath wounds without cause [some do not remember where their wounds came from]? who hath redness of eyes?"

Verse 32 says, "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Alcohol will bite with the poison of addiction. Wine may look inviting to a young person, but it is like a snake or a viper. It is poisonous; it brings woe, sorrow, contention, complaining, and injury from unknown causes because the person is too drunk to remember what happened. He may stagger into something accidentally or get beaten up by someone else.

When I was a small boy, we came home from church one night, and as we went to the front door, someone ran out the back door. My dad called the sheriff and got his brother-in-law to help him search for the intruder. When they saw the man heading down the road, they stopped him and asked if he would like a ride. He was glad to get in the car. My dad asked him, "What were you doing in my house?"

The man said: "I didn't take anything. I'm telling you the truth. I'm drunk, and I thought I

was in a relative's house."

My dad had a big heart and pleaded for the sheriff to have mercy on the man. The sheriff said the man was let out of jail that morning, so he took him back to jail. Wine caused that. Our Scripture text declares, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging." Drinking alcohol is a terrible habit. My heart goes out to people who are bound by the habits of life. I have preached this message with the hope it will stop someone from getting involved in drinking. Maybe someone will get saved. That would be wonderful!

Alcohol Impairs Your Judgment

Isaiah 5:11 reads, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!" Joel 3:3 says, "And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink." That is what alcohol will do. That is sad! A man testified at church once and said: "My problem was, I loved booze more than I loved my kids. God changed all of that." God saved that young man and gave him a love for his children, and he testified he would never go back again.

Wine impairs a person's ability to make the right decisions. Proverbs 31:5 says, "Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." Alcohol numbs the brain, causing a person to think things are great when they are not. Some people experience a loss of mind control, resulting in hallucinations and perversity. Throughout the Word of God, liquor and immorality go hand in hand time and time again.

Wine impoverishes. Proverbs 21:17 reads, "He that loveth plea-

sure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." Wine and strong drink defile the temple of God. First Corinthians 3:16-17 states: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy."



Throughout the Word of God, LIQUOR and IMMORALITY go hand in hand.

Drinking alcohol causes many health issues, minor and major, such as cirrhosis of the liver. It causes declining mental health because alcohol kills brain cells, resulting in forgetfulness and decreased ability to reason. The habit of drinking can become even more important than the welfare of one's children. It becomes a god to some people who live to drink. Drinking is not a disease; it is a sin. God still saves souls from sin.

How does strong drink deceive? Solomon used powerful figures of speech in our Scripture text to warn against drinking and drunkenness. You must understand and fear alcohol's danger. Wine impairs your ability and potentially harms your reputation. Strong drink leads to rage. Drinking can make you drunk and cause you to fight for no reason. You may lose control of your temper. You may go from screaming to fighting. Drinking loosens the tongue, anger sets in,

and the fist takes over. Alcohol affects a person's alertness. The devil wants you to be unaware and unalert. First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Moderation Is Not the Answer

God expects you to quit drinking altogether when you get saved, not just taper off. First Corinthians 6:9-11 states: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

As you read this list the Apostle Paul gave us, ask yourself, "Can I do any of those things in any amount and still be right with God?" The answer is no. You need to be consistent. Fornication is sex before marriage. If you could drink in moderation, then committing fornication in moderation would be okay, but both fornication and drinking are wrong.

Idolatry is wrong. A person cannot be a Christian and have even a few idols; neither can a Christian hold on to a few alcoholic drinks and still be a Christian. Adultery is sex with another partner besides your spouse, and that is wrong. No person can be right with God if they commit adultery just once. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." One must repent, confess, and forsake sin,

not just reduce it.

Being "effeminate" is when a man acts like a female and is heading down the road of sodomy. God says it is wrong and wicked for a man to stop being masculine and act like a woman, even in moderation. "Abusers of themselves with mankind" is an abomination to God. Thievery is wicked. It is wrong for a Christian to steal. You cannot separate petty theft from major theft. All stealing is wrong, even if it is a candy bar.

Covetousness is wrong. Someone may feel it is all right to be covetous if it does not take control of your life. Friend, it is completely wrong. A reviler is a man or woman who has a bad temper. A Christian should not lose his temper at all. An extortioner is involved in the illegal gain of money. A Christian is never to obtain money illegally, not even in moderation.

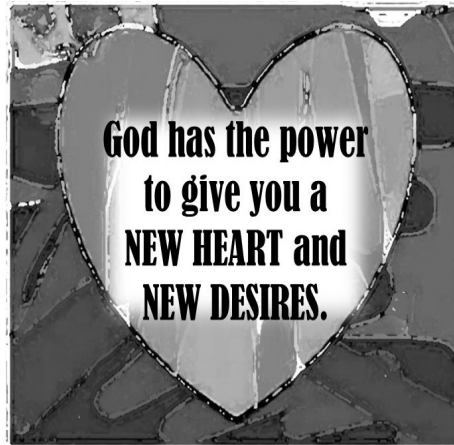
When people read these verses in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, they read all the descriptions correctly until they get to the word "drunkards." Many interpret that to mean God does not want you to get drunk with alcohol, but it is okay if you drink a little. Friend, God does not tolerate any of these sins. God considers a person who takes one drink to be a drunkard. Taking one item from the store makes you a thief, killing one person makes you a murderer, and drinking one alcoholic drink identifies you as a drunkard in God's eyes.

Paul said if you are involved in any of these sins, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God. I like what he stated in verse 11, "And such were some of you." Some people attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and even if they have not drunk an alcoholic beverage in twenty years, their testimony is, "I am an alcoholic, but I have been sober for twenty years." In the Church of God, when you get saved, you

are no longer an alcoholic because you are changed.

Jesus Is the Answer

If a Christian uses any other method besides Christ to cope with his problems, he is like a married man running to a harlot. It is wicked in God's eyes. A professing Christian does not need a beer or a glass of wine to help him relax at the end of the day. That is a cheap substitute for prayer and fellowship with God. The best wisdom mankind has ever known comes from God, our Creator and Sustainer, who warns us to stay away from strong drink. Christians are to be holy, discerning good and evil.



Strong drink brings destruction. Young person, you need to make a vow to leave drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes alone. The true Christian stays clear of these things.

First Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." What kind of testimony would a Christian have if he went to a drive-through and bought a twelve-pack of beer? If anyone saw him, they would probably say: "I don't want his religion! He doesn't have anything to offer me." You cannot be a light if you do what the world does. A man committed to living a holy and virtuous life for the glory of God will have nothing to

do with wine or strong drink.

The good news is Jesus Christ has a cure for the addict. Become a slave to Him, and He will free you from everything else! The Gospel works because it is supernatural, and it changes lives. God has the power to give you a new heart and new desires. Only God, through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit, can take away the condemnation of sin and change a person internally so he no longer wants what he once desired. The man who was once a drunk is not just sober; he is converted and has become "a new creature" in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Is it your desire to live for the glory of God as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you still controlled by "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16)? Are you living with eternity in view? Drinking will never solve your problems. It puts off the old problems while creating new ones.

If you get drunk, whether frequently or rarely, then you have a serious problem, and you need to admit it. If you manage to keep from getting drunk, but desire the feeling a strong drink gives, then you are headed in the wrong direction. It may already be a controlling influence in your life. If you need a drink to relax or sleep, then it is a controlling influence. You are playing with fire, and you will get burned. You do not need wine to make you shine.

My mother used to sing a song entitled "The Price of the Bottle," along with a recitation by the Louvin Brothers:

*I talked to myself one night in my
room,
And looked back on my wasted
years.
Just me and my conscience while
facing my doom.
My eyes filled with cold, bitter tears.*

My sins were unnumbered, my chances were small,
That God would forgive or forget,
A slave to the bottle that makes a man fall
And sink to a life of regret.

The price of the bottle is just a down payment,
There's no way of knowing the cost.
For money can't comfort the hearts that are broken,
Nor buy back the souls that are lost.

Recitation:

While touring the country not long ago, I stood in line in a whiskey store while a young man ahead of me

convinced the cashier that his check was good. "Everybody knows me," he said, then he mentioned his dad; it was an easy name to remember. The cashier took his check with a smile.

The picture in the headlines in the morning paper made my heart bleed with pain. The twisted remains of a car that had struck a bridge railing, overturned, and burst into flames, held the bodies of this young man, his wife, and their three-year-old daughter. I ask you, friend, what is the price of the bottle?

Young person, I pray you would consider making this vow:

"I am not going to drink alcohol no matter what my friends do or how much peer pressure I may have to endure. I pray for God to empower me to be what He would have me to be." Maybe you are bound by the habits of life. It might not be alcohol; it could be drugs or tobacco. Friend, God can save you and change you completely. You can be set free by the power of God.

(Compact Disc TR-2314)

Brother Larry Dishman is a Church of God evangelist from Hurley, MS.



Statement of Condition

for 11 months ending December 31, 2023

	Income	Expenses
Supplies		\$ 28,814.02
Miscellaneous Expenses		\$ 5,606.06
Wages		\$ 45,494.83
Payroll Taxes/Insurance/Workers' Comp		\$ 16,324.68
Donations/Offerings	\$ 16,492.41	
Equipment/Maintenance/Repairs		\$ -
Postage		\$ 115,944.73
Subtotals	\$ 16,492.41	\$ 212,184.32
<i>Balance paid out of the general fund of the Church of God congregation at Newark, OH.</i>		\$ 195,691.91



Isaiah 46:1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods. The pagans typically had many gods, and these were two of the chief gods. In the Bible, the names of famous kings and even some of God's people came from Bel and Nebo. For instance, King Belshazzar comes from Bel, and Nebuchadnezzar comes from Nebo. *Bel* means to "guard his life." Daniel's name was changed to Belteshazzar. This young, godly man was taken to Babylon and given a name after an idol, or a false god. The name *Abednego* means "servant of Nebo." These two names—Bel and Nebo—are woven into the history of Babylon.

Bel (also known as Merodach) was believed to be the divine protector of the city of Babylon. He was considered the chief of the gods. Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian, said the Euphrates River divided the city into two sections. Within the center of each section was a circular place surrounded by a wall. The royal palace was on one side, and the temple, Jupiter Belus (or Bel), was on the other.

The temple for Bel was a square building, and the length of each side was two furlongs, or about 1,300 feet long. (A football field is three

hundred and sixty feet long; so this building would have been over three-and-a-half football fields long.) A tower arose in the middle, and the solid depth and height was one furlong, or six hundred feet. At the base of this tower, seven turrets were built in regular succession. In this temple was a solid gold statue of Bel, which stood twelve cubits, or eighteen feet high. The huge gates of brass may still be seen in the ruins today.

Nebo (also known as Nabu) was said to be the son of Bel, or Merodach, and lived nearby in Borsippa. Nebo was considered as being the chief speaker of the gods. It was believed he had invented writing (cuneiform). He was a keeper of the tablets and a scribe. In the Middle East, an inscription on the temple statue of Nebo by Adad-nirari III, King of Assyria (804 B.C.), reads:

"To the god Nebo who is heroic, exalted, surpassing in wisdom, mighty prince whose command is supreme, master of the arts, guardian of all heaven and earth, all knowing, whose ear is open, who writes the book of man's life and destiny, merciful, approachable, who depopulate and repopulate the land, lord of lords, whose might has no equal, without whom no counsel is given in heaven, merciful, compassionate, kindly forgiving. Trust in the god Nebo! Do not trust in another god."

If this inscription were true, the city of Babylon should have had nothing to worry about. Nebo should have had it under his control.

Once a year, during their New Year's festival, the people would

carry the images of Merodach (Bel) and his son Nebo through Babylon in a solemn procession. Nebo was brought from the nearby town of Borsippa to Babylon to visit his father, Bel. The people would parade the two statues through the city streets on their shoulders. Can you imagine how heavy they must have been? They probably needed many shoulders to carry those statues. That was the way they worshiped and displayed their gods.

Isaiah prophesied what would happen to Babylon, saying that Cyrus would conquer the city. Babylon was seemingly unconquerable and impregnable. It had a vast river that was their lifeline through the middle, but Cyrus diverted it while Belshazzar was having a party. This was when the handwriting on the wall occurred (Daniel, Chapter 5), and Babylon was overtaken. Those gods (Bel and Nebo) who had been bowed down to were now, as our Scripture text says, stooping and bowing.

The people of Babylon had been parading, worshiping, and praising the gods of Bel and Nebo, gods who were supposed to have wisdom. Again, the inscription to Nebo said, "Whose might has no equal." According to their beliefs, those gods should have been able to foresee what was coming and warned the people. Supposedly, Nebo had wisdom and could have warned the king so he could save the city. That is what the people expected from the gods they were worshiping. Can you imagine the taxes the people had to pay to build an eighteen-foot-high

statue of gold?

Consider how it must have been for the people of Babylon as they were carried into captivity. The Israelites were already captives of Babylon. Now, the Babylonian people were taken into captivity. As they left the city, most of them did not ride on horses or donkeys. They had to walk and carry their most precious possessions, including clothes, food, and babies. Think about the people walking into captivity, carrying whatever they could. Their conquerors put the gods of Bel and Nebo on the backs of cows and horses.

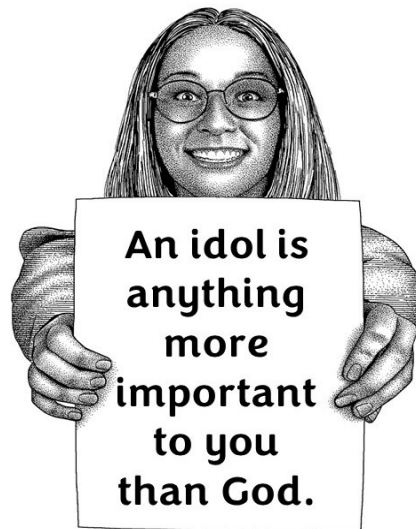
"They are a burden to the weary beast" (Isaiah 46:1). The idols the people had placed their trust in were being carried into captivity alongside them. All were going into captivity together. The people had celebrated and partied every New Year's Day, lifting and carrying these idols. However, these idols could not save them now. They were stooped and bowed down. Not only did they not help them, but the people had to place them on their beasts to be physically carried. No doubt, it was hard for them mentally to see their idols in such a way.

Isaiah compared their light-hearted carrying of the idols on New Year's Day to being carried into captivity. It was a slow transport to a foreign land. The idols, which should have been their carriers as Jehovah was to His people, had become burdens on the backs of weary beasts.

Isaiah 46:3-4 reads: "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs [white hairs] will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." God was telling Israel: "You have been carrying these heavy idols around, and they can do nothing for you. I did not create you to be an idol bearer. I created you to be carried by Me." God created you to need Him from the time you are born until your old age. He has made

you with the need to be carried by Him, not to be a carrier of idols.

Imagine walking into captivity and remembering the words of God. The children of Israel may have thought: "God would have helped us if we would have leaned on Him. We put our trust in these golden images, these huge statues, because that was the thing to do. The Babylonians were worshipping them. They could see them. It was hard to worship a God we could not see. We put all our trust into these images, but that was not God's plan! We were not meant to carry these idols. God wants to carry, bear, and deliver us; instead, we rejected Him and chose



to carry these useless, heavy idols!"

I doubt anyone has a statue of gold they worship and carry on their shoulders around their neighborhood on New Year's Day. You may laugh and say: "I know a stone or piece of wood would not help me or answer my prayers. Why would anyone kneel to a statue and pray?" What if the Old Testament people could see some idols people have today? They might say, "At least we could see our idols."

Do you have any idols that are not so obvious but are just as heavy? An *idol* is defined as "anything that replaces God and becomes more important than God." Anything we turn to instead of God can become an idol! In his book *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller wrote, "An idol is

anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and your imagination more than God, and anything you seek to give you what only God can give."

Idols can be different things to different people. Money, a career, entertainment, sex, social media, cell phones, busyness, and self can all be considered idols. In their proper place, these things are not always sinful. How can you know when they have become idols? The Israelites bowed to idols such as Baal and Ashtaroth. Their neighbors had idols, and Israel wanted to be like their neighbors, so they became involved in idol worship, which was against God's laws.

In our day, there is a need to make money because we all need money to survive. Brethren need a career. Entertainment is not always wrong. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is an old saying. God knows we need time to have fun. God has a plan for sex in marriage, so in the right time and place, sex is not sinful. Social media can be used for good. Cell phones are not sinful. They sometimes become necessary. It is good to be busy because idle hands are the devil's workshop. Finally, we need to care for ourselves by keeping our bodies clean and eating right.

Any of these can become idols when they get out of their place. Idols are more deceptive today because they are things we have with us all the time, which are not sinful in themselves. We are not bothered by obvious things God's Word warns us to avoid and stay away from completely. Everyday things can become idols. Again, the definition of *idol* is "anything that takes God's place, anything we turn to instead of God, and anything that absorbs our heart and imagination."

Let me ask you a few questions: What do you spend most of your time on? Could that become an idol? What do you think about the most? Do you think, "I should talk to the Lord right now, but I need to check my phone," and then you completely

forget about God? Does what you are doing replace God, even for a few minutes?

What do you do when you feel depressed? Eat chocolate, sleep, cry, listen to music, or mindlessly surf the internet? These might not seem to be idols, but do you go to them to make you feel better and help you deal with the circumstances of life instead of going to the Lord? When you have a bad day, do you complain about it to someone else, or do you read your Bible?

What makes you happy? A good talk with Jesus, a good book, a movie, a clean bedroom, or your parents leaving you alone? What do you do when you become stressed or have problems? Some turn to comfort food, coffee, or other things. Others might talk to a friend, go for a run, or go to sleep and try to forget. Sometimes, a good cry can seem to help. However, are you using any of these things to *replace* God helping you?

God said, "I will carry [you]" (Isaiah 46:4). What do you do when you are too tired to make it through the day? Late one afternoon, I had some things to care for and felt very tired. I decided to make a cup of coffee. Instead of telling the Lord I was struggling more than usual with tiredness and needed His help, I had a second cup of coffee. I do not think it was wrong to drink more coffee, but the Lord was not my default, caffeine was. I felt sad when I realized I had never thought about telling God I needed His help.

Coffee quotes are everywhere, such as, "Four cups of coffee a day may keep depression at bay" (Steve Magee). Another one is, "With enough coffee, I feel that all things are possible." You may laugh if you like coffee, and it gives you a little boost. God said, "I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee" (Isaiah 41:10). Again, drinking coffee may not be wrong, but are we putting our trust in something other than God? Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is good to re-

mind ourselves of these verses.

God said, "I have made [you]" (Isaiah 43:7). What do you do when everything is going wrong, you do not understand, and you are frustrated? Do you grumble, complain, or throw things? Some people may turn to drugs. Some may work overtime. Some call a friend, which may not help at all and cause two people to be miserable. Some will go to sleep or listen to certain kinds of music other than Gospel when they become frustrated.

None of these things—coffee, food, chocolate, drugs, work, sleep,



"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Proverbs 3:5

or music—offer long-lasting fixes. They may help you forget your struggles for a time, but they will not help you work through your problems. If you use things to cope and help you forget, they are not helping the problem. Many times, we sat down with our children, talked things through, and (most importantly) prayed together.

Psalm 147:5 reads, "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." When life does not make sense, and sometimes it will not, great is God's understanding. It is infinite! *Infinite* means "no end; it is forever." There is no end to God's understanding, like the infinite universe continually expanding. We need to talk to Him and give Him our problems.

Proverbs 3:5 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Your understanding is not infinite. When you fail to trust in God, you are putting an idol or a coping mechanism in God's place. Essentially, you are saying: "This will help me deal with my problems. This will help me feel better." It may or may not be something sinful, but are you grabbing an idol for a moment and letting it fulfill God's place?

God said, "I will bear [you]" (Isaiah 46:4). What are you bearing on your shoulders? Is it grief? Some have lost loved ones or gone through difficult, abusive situations. These hard places and burdens can feel like someone is pushing on your shoulders and shoving you down. They can be heavy! Maybe you are struggling with a relationship. Perhaps you have a difficult history and are dealing with past problems. Your past mistakes may keep coming up, and you are having trouble forgiving yourself. Maybe you are depressed, angry, or feeling guilty because of what you did in the past.

Perhaps you have been disrespected. Maybe you feel as though you have no friends. You may think you have no voice and cannot speak up and tell others how you feel. These are heavy things, but they are common. Most people have felt these things at one time or another. How do these things become idols? When you keep carrying them, rather than taking them to God and allowing Him to carry you and your burdens, they become idols.

How do you cope with your burdens? Do you isolate yourself by entering a room, shutting the door, and not talking to anyone? In time, that becomes problematic because we are not made to be alone. You may keep thinking about your problems: "What that person said was so disrespectful! It hurt my feelings. I cannot believe they did that to me." You may continually think about it over and over. Basically, you are saying: "I am going to carry this burden no matter what! You cannot take it from me. I am leaving it on my shoulders!"

Some people continually

complain to others, causing others to become tired from hearing all the complaints. We are not made to bear the complaints of others. Many people neglect prayer, the very avenue we need to get help. Some allow dark thoughts to occupy their minds, and they feel worthless. They feel life is not worth living. Dark thoughts will work on you. If you are holding on to your burdens—the idol on your shoulders—you will begin to push people away.

God is saying, "I will bear [you]" (Isaiah 46:4). Whatever you are dealing with, God said He would bear you and all your burdens. He will help you with them. They will be less heavy because God is carrying you and your burdens. Too many times, people say: "No! I will carry my burdens alone!" When this happens, they have created an idol, something they are holding on to, and it is taking God's place.

God said, "I . . . will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4). Maybe you have the idol of addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, or gambling. God has promised to deliver you from that idol. When you refuse to turn it over to God and hang on to your addiction, you are carrying an idol around. You may be addicted to things that are fun or supposed to be for good, such as your phone, entertainment, or social media. It could be sports, a career, education, being too busy, or working too much. Mark Driscoll said, "Idols could be *good* things that you turn into *god* things that then become *bad* things." An idol is something you allow to take too much importance, time, or priority in your life.

You may say, "I am too tired to pray tonight, but real quick, I am going to check my Facebook or Instagram," and forty-five minutes later, you are more tired. Social media did not help, encourage, bless, or strengthen you, as prayer would have. More than likely, it discouraged you. You went to bed later than you should have. Or you get in bed and try to talk to the Lord as you fall

asleep. How productive do you think your conversation with the Lord will be? How much of your free time is spent on things that are not spiritual?

When you feel worthless, do you say to yourself, "I just cannot get it together"? The Lord has worked with me on this. When I am stressed and trying to sleep at night, I go through my to-do list and check things off in my mind. It is calming to me when things are orderly and getting done. My life would be a mess if I did not have a to-do list. I once made the statement that checking off my to-do list helps me go to sleep, and God said to me, "Instead of Me?" He showed me an area in my life that I



**YOU ARE
NOT
MADE
TO BE
AN
IDOL
BEARER.**

needed to work on.

We are all different. You may not have to-do lists like I do, but you may have something that makes you feel better about yourself and helps you cope or deal with situations other than God. When stressed, do you lose yourself and your problems in a good book, movie, or music? That might not be wrong, but if you do it all the time, you never deal with your problems or take those things to the Lord. You are self-medicating by putting a band-aid on them, so to speak, and pushing God away.

Are there things in your life replacing God as your Deliverer? God said, "I . . . will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4). Sometimes, we need to be delivered from clouds of depression and being overwhelmed. I have said, "There is too much to do, and I am drowning!" Sometimes, I dive in and see how fast I can get everything

done, but I become more discouraged and tired than I was to start with. God is saying: "I will deliver you! Come and talk to Me. I will help you. You are carrying idols, and you are not made to be an idol bearer."

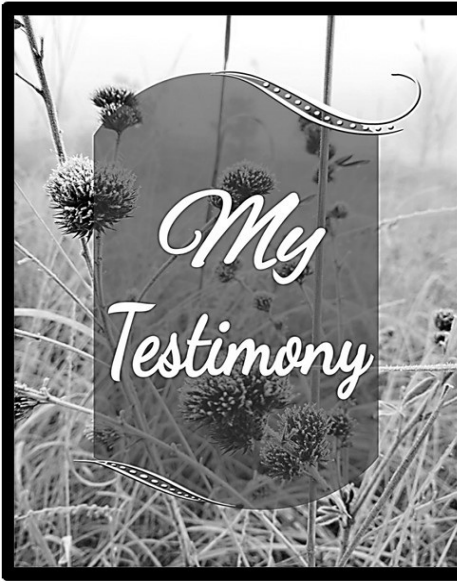
False gods will fail you. Bel and Nebo did not save the Babylonians. They were stooping and bowing. They made the captivity worse. C. S. Lewis once said, "Idols always break the hearts of the worshippers." What are you replacing God with to help you in life? It may, seemingly, work for a while. Think about the Babylonian New Year's celebration and how they brought those idols out and paraded them through the streets. Everyone felt good. They were undoubtedly drinking and partying, and everything was going well for a while. You may have a few moments of feeling like "this is working" while your idols are being paraded around, but in time, they will fail you.

In Isaiah 46:3, God said, "Hearken unto me." In other words: "Listen, people of God, from the moment you were in your mother's belly until the time you die, I want to carry you! I created you and want to bear and deliver you!" In verse 5, God said, "To whom will ye liken me [to Bel, Nebo, or any of these modern idols?], and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?"

Verse 9 states, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." Young person, when you feel overwhelmed, depressed, or discouraged, or if you are dealing with something too much to handle, I trust you will pause for a moment and remember that you are not made to be an idol bearer. You are made to be carried. God wants to help you!

Sister Sheri Strelecky

Sister Sheri and her husband, Brother Steve, are the youth leaders at the Church of God in Newark, OH.



The House of Worship

Sister Carla Presley

I want to thank the Lord for our Wednesday night services. I really appreciate the Lord and being able to get to the house of worship. During the COVID shutdown, I realized how I have taken things for granted. Before that, I took every service for granted, thinking we would

always be together in worship.

Before everything happened, one morning in Sunday school class, Brother Orr said, "There might come a time when we will not be able to meet together." I thought, "That is never going to happen, maybe to our grandkids, but that will never happen in my

lifetime." Yet, it did.

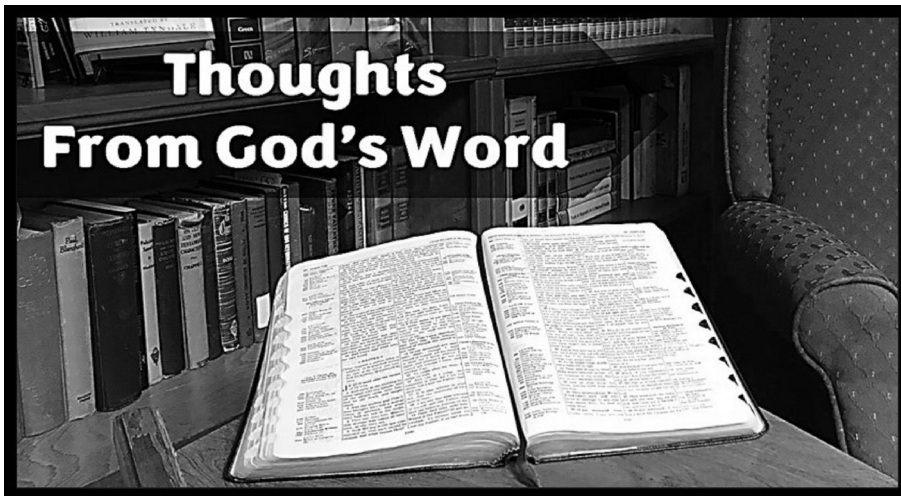
While I appreciate the online services, it is hard when we are not with the saints of God. That is what my soul needs. It is so good to see my pastor and others face to face. It is good to have fellowship with one another. People who are not saved do not understand and will not understand things like this until they have that personal walk with God.

During COVID, I learned we do not have to fear that virus (or anything) because, no matter what, God is taking care of us!

Our choir sings a song that says: "*We're blessed! We're blessed! We're blessed! Our pastor preaches the truth, and we're in the true Church of God! We are blessed!*"

I thank the Lord!

Sister Carla Presley attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Thoughts From God's Word

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

1 John 3:17

We read many times in the Bible about Jesus having compassion. We also read how those

around Jesus were ready to send others, or even the multitudes, away. They did not have the great compassion Jesus had.

I ask you the question, "Do you have the same compassion Jesus had?" If you see someone struggling, do you run to help them, or do you send them away? Maybe you think, "I will

pray for them," when it could be in your power to help them.

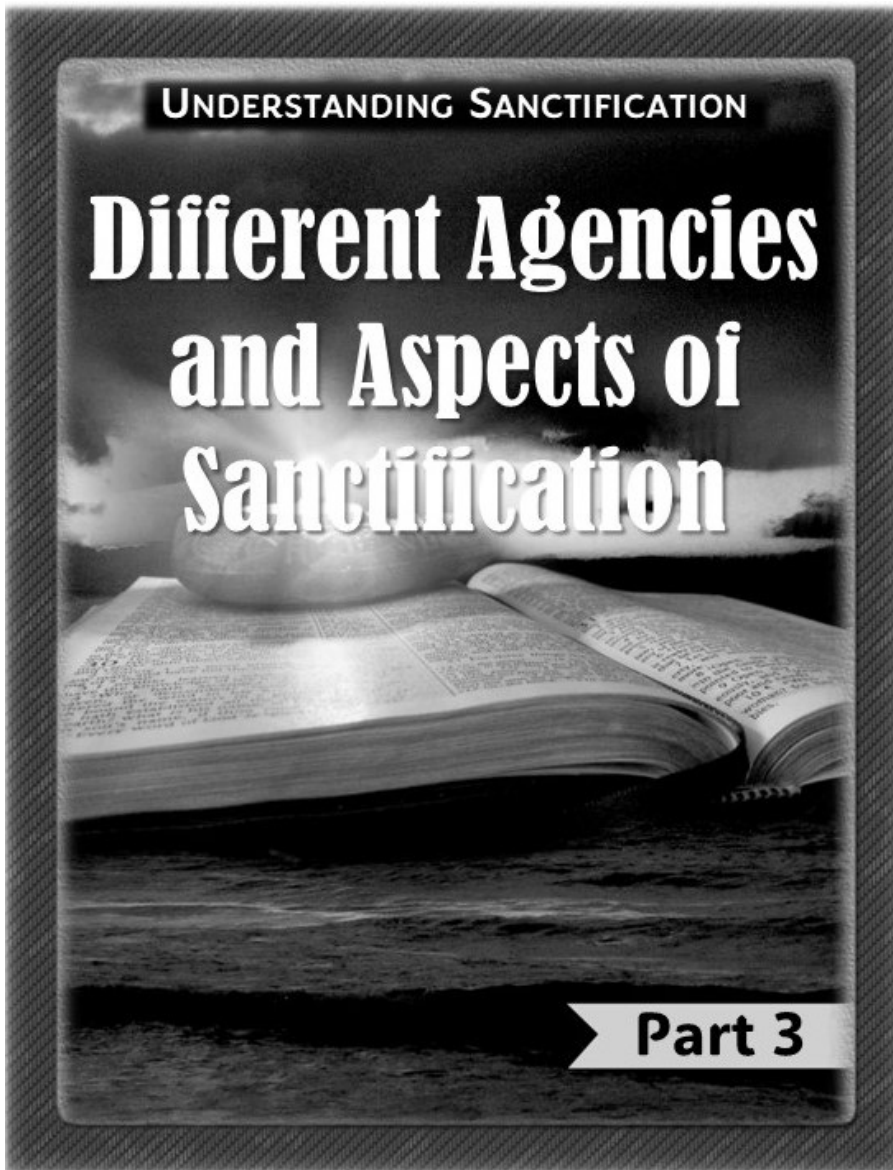
Proverbs 21:13 says, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

In all things, Jesus is our example. Let us be compassionate like Him. Hebrews 13:16 reads, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Luke 6:38 says: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Sister Jennifer Spurlock

Sister Jennifer Spurlock attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Brother Earl R. Borders

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but

we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Jesus desires we be sanctified through the truth of His Word. Sanctification is progressive. As our understanding progresses in the Word,

so does our sanctification. Second Peter 3:18 says, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Christ is the Word (John 1:1, 14, 17). As our knowledge of the Word increases, He administers grace to incorporate that knowledge into our lives, and we become more sanctified, or set apart.

Ephesians 4:11-15 states: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [or completing] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." We will always need the ministry. Growing is a process. God uses the ministry to help develop a people.

One writer penned: "We believe in sanctification. We believe it to be a second experience, a second work of grace, a cleansing and a purging of our carnal nature." The traditional teaching is that sanctification is an instantaneous, one-time experience of an eradication of a sinful, carnal, inherited nature.

Our Scripture text says: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, [Running a race is a progressive effort. You run until you reach the goal, which in our case is a blissful eternity.] but one receiveth the prize? So run [present tense], that ye may obtain [future tense]. And every man that striveth

[present and continual tense] for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain the corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

"I therefore so run, [Paul was still engaged in the race. He kept his eyes on the prize, but he had not received it yet.] not as uncertainly [he knew what the goal was]; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, [If Paul's carnal nature was eradicated by a second work of grace, why would he need to keep under his body?] and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

The Greek word for *castaway* is translated in other Scriptures as "reprobate" (Romans 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:16). Even after Paul preached to others, he knew there was a risk for him to become a reprobate, or "a cast-away." First Corinthians 9:27 in the *Amplified Bible* reads, "But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it." Sanctification does not remove our human nature. We must contend with it until we die. We are not making allowance for sin, but it is dangerous to say you can make a one-time move and the issue with your fleshly nature will be forever resolved.

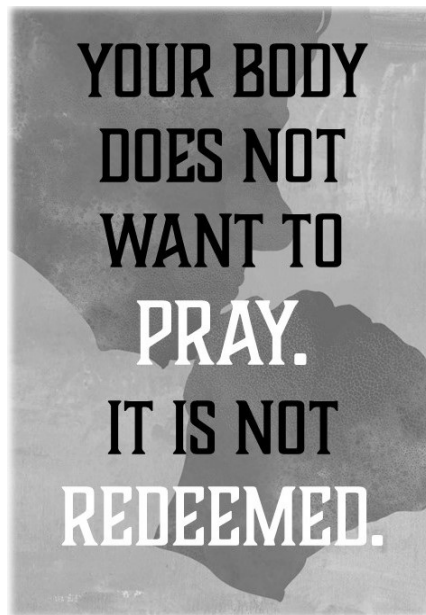
Contending With the Flesh

Second Peter 1:4 says we become "partakers of the divine nature." However, we still have a human nature we must bring under and keep in subjection every day. When you feel inspired to pray, you wrestle with yourself, not your husband, wife, or children. Your body does not want to pray. It is not redeemed. Sometimes, it does not want to read the Bible. It will also give you any excuse possible to stay out of the church services if you

let it.

When Jesus was in the garden, He prayed in Matthew 26:39, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Yet Jesus said in John 12:27: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." Jesus knew why He came, yet He still battled with His flesh. He was in temptation.

Matthew 26:40-41 states: "He



cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The disciples were not in temptation; they were asleep. Jesus was being tempted in His flesh and body. The weakness is not in the *spirit*, but in the *flesh*. Jesus said, "I sanctify myself" (John 17:19). He was already sanctified, but His flesh was weak. The flesh is always weak.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul said he had "a thorn in the flesh." The Lord told him in verse 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul was contending with human weaknesses. We

all have human weaknesses, and we must apply for grace to gain victory in times of weakness. The grace did not remove the weakness (the thorn), but it gave Paul strength and power to be victorious in the midst of it.

God did not take the three Hebrew boys *out* of the fire; He saved them *in* the fire. God does the same for us. First Peter 4:12 states, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Again, God does not save us *from* the fire; He saves us *in* the fire. He gives a sufficiency of grace, not in one or two works, but by the grace that works throughout our experience.

We have fleshly desires to contend with, even after we are saved. Paul wrote to people who were regenerated and had a change of nature. Romans 13:14 reads, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." There is only one way you can put on the Lord — by putting on the Word (Jesus; John, Chapter 1). Another rendering says, "Spend no thought on your earthly nature to satisfy its cravings." Paul wrote this Epistle to the congregation in Rome. He was not writing to the world but to God's people. God changes your nature when you get saved, but you still have a body to keep in subjection.

In sin, the flesh triumphs over the soul. The soul gives in to the flesh and does what sin dictates. Paul clearly explained this in Romans, Chapter 7. Paul said he found himself doing things he knew he should not do and not doing things he knew he should do. Verses 17-18 state: "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." When sin is removed through salvation, the heart and nature change, and

the spirit rules over the flesh. However, there is still a flesh to contend with.

Galatians 5:16-17 reads: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." You cannot walk in the Spirit if you are not *in* the Spirit. If you do not possess the Spirit, you cannot be directed in your walk by the Spirit because the flesh is contrary to the Spirit.

Bringing the Body Into Subjection

Romans 8:9 says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is dangerous to think you can obtain an experience in which you will not need to deal with the flesh. Galatians 5:16 in *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "the desires of the flesh." Romans 13:14 admonishes, "Make not provision for the flesh." We are not encouraging making provision for the flesh. Nevertheless, the Bible does not teach an experience that will eradicate or eliminate your human nature.

We constantly must, as Paul wrote, "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Sometimes, you are tempted to speak when it would be better to keep silent. Other times, you ought to talk but do not want to. Perhaps it is necessary to stand for the truth, but it is uncomfortable. You may not know what to do, but God will tell you. The psalmist said in Psalm 139:2, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off."

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Verse 7 tells us there is "a time to keep silence, and a



time to speak." You will know when to keep silent and when to speak by walking in the Spirit and listening to Him. Your human nature will want you to be quiet when you ought to speak and to speak when you need to be quiet. We must keep the flesh under subjection to the spirit.

Romans 8:10-11 states: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin [talking about the body of sin, not your physical flesh; you do not physically die as soon as God saves you]; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [make alive] your mortal bodies [not talking about the resurrection day because our bodies will be immortal on that day] by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

When conversion occurs, God makes your mortal body spiritually alive by His Holy Spirit that now dwells within you. He gives you the power of His Spirit to help you keep your body under. When a person is in sin, the body is under the domination of sin, and Satan controls him. In salvation, the body no longer dominates because the Spirit takes over.

Verses 12-14 say: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye

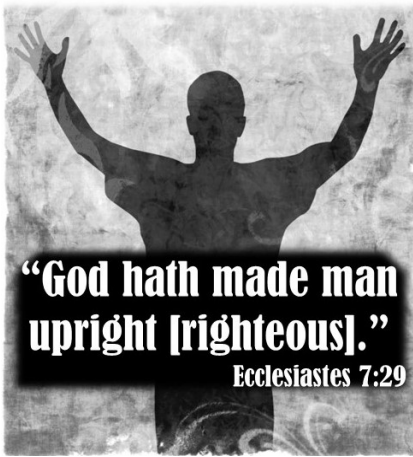
shall die: [You can still choose to live after the flesh. Salvation does not eradicate your power of choice.] but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says 'put to death'] the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Verse 13 says "through the Spirit," we can "mortify the deeds of the body." *Wuest's Expanded New Testament and Word Studies in the Greek* says, "By the Spirit you are habitually putting to death the deeds of the body."

The *Amplified Bible* reads, "Through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body." *Habitually* means "continually becomes a habit." You can habitually, or continually, put the flesh down today, but you will face him again tomorrow. Not every move of the flesh is a sin, but it can become a sin. This is an example of progressive sanctification working on an ongoing, continual basis.

God Made Man Upright

The underlying error is the fallacious doctrine of original sin. This teaching says every child is born with an inherited, sinful, depraved, carnal nature because of the fall of man. Augustine of Hippo, a Roman Catholic theologian from A.D. 354 to 430, propagated and popularized this erroneous teaching. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth will free you from error and falsity.

Acts 10:34 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." James 2:9 reads, "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin." Second Timothy 3:16 lets us know the



Bible is the inspired Word of God. Therefore, if God is no respecter of persons, we need to refer back to the beginning of man.

Genesis 1:26 reads, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The words *our* and *us* refer to the Trinity, or the Triune Godhead. God did not make man after the nature of angels. Hebrews, Chapter 2, lets you know the nature of angels differs from the seed of man. If God made Adam "in our image, after our likeness," then He is duty-bound to create everyone else in the same manner, or He would be a respecter of persons.

Colossians 3:9-10, speaking of the regeneration, states, "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Ephesians and Colossians are companion Epistles. Ephesians 4:24 reads, "And that ye put on the new man [speaking of the same experience], which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The Colossian Epistle terms it "the image of him," and Ephesians defines it as "righteousness and true holiness." When God created Adam, He created him in "righteousness and true holiness." Since God is "no respecter of persons," every other person

who has come into this world has come in a state of "righteousness and true holiness."

Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Sin comes by choice, not by inheritance. If people can blame their sins on someone else, they will never receive help. Some husbands who cannot hold an experience blame their wives. Wives will try to blame their husbands. Some children blame their parents. Others will blame the ones they work with. Those are all lame excuses. Individuals will never receive help if they think someone else is the problem.

Part of a familiar children's song entitled "Standing in the Need of Prayer" says: "*Not my father, not my mother, but it's me, O Lord, Standin' in the need of prayer. Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, Standin' in the need of prayer.*"

Everyone turns to his own way when they reach the age of accountability. Romans 5:6 states, "For when we were yet without strength." Although created in "righteousness and true holiness," we did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit before conversion. Thus, we chose our own way. The Bible makes it clear the doctrine of original sin is not an accurate Biblical doctrine. Children born subsequent to Adam are not referred to as having original sin.

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote three books of the Bible, including Ecclesiastes, which was written in approximately 977 B.C. He wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:29, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright." The Hebrew word for "upright" is *yashar* (the same word translated as "righteous" in Numbers 23:10 and other Scriptures for a total of nine times). It was written at least 3027 years

after Creation. God was still making man righteous when Solomon was divinely inspired to write these words.

The rest of that verse continues, "But they [not Adam or Eve] have sought out many inventions." "They" wrongfully exercise their power of choice. The responsibility for sin lies within the individual. God makes every child in the same spiritual state as Adam.

Ezekiel, Chapter 28, was written around 588 B.C., about 389 more years subsequent to the fall of man. We have moved further up on the historical scale. Verse 12 reads, "Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus." God was talking to a man. Verse 15 says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee." King Tyrus was perfect the day he was created "till iniquity was found." He was not born with innate or inherited sin.

Sin Is Not Inherited

Man cannot inherit a sinful condition. Consider Christ, who is our "example" (1 Peter 2:21). There are those who espouse the argument, "Jesus did not inherit the sinful nature because He was born of Mary, and no man was involved in His conception." Think about what this position is advocating—a sinful, carnal nature is inherited from *men*, not *women*. Does this mean only men, not women, need a second work of grace? It would be contrary to the teaching that God is no respecter of persons. Hebrews 2:14 states, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [speaking of Christ; verse 9] also himself likewise took part of the same."

Verses 16-17 say: "He took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto

his brethren." These reveal one of two things must be true. If "his brethren" were all born with an inherited sinful nature, then for Christ "*in all things . . . to be made like unto his brethren*," He also must have been born with a sinful, carnal nature; or if Jesus was not born with an inherited, sinful nature (and we know He was not), then "his brethren" also were not born with a sinful, carnal nature.

Hebrews 7:26 says, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled." Gabriel announced to Mary in Luke 1:35, "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." The only conclusion we can make is Jesus was not born with inherited sin, and neither were His brethren.

Ezekiel 18:1-4 reads: "The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel [in other words, 'Quit saying the father sinned, and that is what is wrong with the children']. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." This Scripture indicates action or choice.

Psalms 139:13-14 states: "For thou hast possessed *my* reins: thou hast covered *me* [personal pronouns] in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my *soul* knoweth right well." The "my" and "me" in verse 13 is the "soul" in verse 14. You have a

body, but the real you is the soul.

Verses 15-16 say: "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret [speaking of the marital act of conception], and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect [no body yet, only a conceived embryo]; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." God places the soul in at



conception before there is a body with members. That is why abortion is murder. Verses 17-18 read: "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee."

In Galatians 2:17, Paul said, "Is . . . Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." If all souls belong to God, and the soul is placed in the body at the time of conception, would God put a sinful soul into a body? No, He is *not* "the minister of sin." A spiritual condition cannot be inherited. That is a scripturally unfounded position based on teachings that became popular during the Dark Ages and were passed on through the generations.

Sin is a willful transgression. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth [there must be a knowledge] to do good, and

doeth it not [there must be an exercise of the will], to him it is sin." There are not two forms of sin—actual and inherited. Sin is a willful act, and there are no Scriptures that teach sin in two forms.

We must ask some serious questions. Where does this sinful nature come from? The sinful nature supposedly is perpetual through reproduction. However, if both parents are saved and sanctified, and their carnal natures are eradicated, how is it then produced in their children? Does God place it there? If you can inherit sin from your parents, could you also inherit salvation from them? Also, if a person is saved and sanctified, his carnal nature is eradicated and removed, then what happens if he backslides? Does he get it back? If so, where does it come from? Can it be inherited twice or more often than once? These questions need Biblical answers, but there are no Biblical answers because inherited sin is not a Biblical doctrine.

Progressing in Our Spiritual Walk

Again, sanctification is not instantaneous but progressive. It takes your entire life to receive entire sanctification. First John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God [this only takes place through the new birth, by being born again], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." We are not finished products. John was not talking about the physical resurrection. Verse 3 reads, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The word "purifieth"

according to *Strong's Greek Dictionary of New Testament Words* is *hagnizo*. One definition is "to sanctify." This verse is referring to the progressive nature of sanctification. It is an ongoing process.

John penned in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Walking is a progression, an advancement, or a move "in the light." Psalm 119:105 tells us, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." His Word will show you where you are standing, the position you are now in, and the path you need to take, or the moves you need to make. Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

John said to "walk in the light," or the understanding, God gives. When we do that, we continue to have "fellowship" (the Greek word is *koinonia*, which means "share in common"). The context of 1 John, Chapter 1, is we share this God-life in common. As we grow in grace and knowledge, gaining a greater understanding of His Word, we become more conformed to the image of Christ, more sanctified and set apart, so in the end, we will be more like Him.

It is an erroneous, fallacious, and dangerous position to feel we have arrived or apprehended in our experience to where no further perfecting or sanctifying is necessary. Such thinking will prevent us from progressing in our spiritual walk. This progressive sanctification does not produce frivolous, light, loose living. It does not promote a compromise with the world, worldliness, or apostasy; rather, it enhances, increases, and improves holiness. It brings about a constant caution

and consecration.

Philippians 3:12-14 states: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect [the Greek word is *teleos*, which means 'complete']: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended [the traditional teaching of two works of grace makes too many feel they have apprehended]: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth [a constant effort] unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize [a continual effort while we

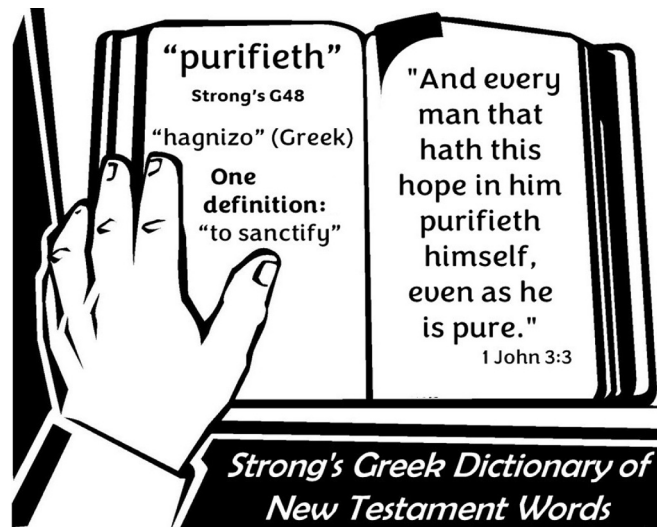
mains in the heart after salvation, must either believe an individual would need to be added to the church after being sanctified, or the church is not holy and without blemish. Romans 3:4 says, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." God's Word is true. If both Ephesians 5:27 and Acts 2:47 are true (and we know they are), then you are added to the church when you are saved. It is indeed "a glorious church," and there is no more sin in your heart after God saves you.

Sanctification is a continual process. As the Spirit of God opens "the eyes of your understanding" (Ephesians 1:18) and we become more "enlightened" concerning the Word, we can incorporate it into our lives. It enables us to be more set apart. Sanctification is a Biblical doctrine; the Lord desires us to live a sanctified life. There should be no allowance or excuse for sin, but we should live "in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:75).

Second Peter 3:18 says to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Every child has an

instantaneous birth, and the new birth is also an instantaneous experience. After a child receives physical life, he goes through a growing process. We, as children of God, grow in our experience of salvation. Sanctification is three-fold: pre-conversion, conversion, and post-conversion (or progressive). We have not attained or apprehended. We are still in this Christian race, growing and moving "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Brother Earl R. Borders is the pastor of the Church of God in Summersville, WV.



live] of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 5:27 reads, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." If the church is "holy and without blemish," and you are "added to the church" when you are "saved," there must not be any sin in your heart after you are saved, or there would be sin in the church.

Those who believe the teaching of inherited sin, that sin re-

Spring Camp Meeting

June 16-23

Please join us for an old-fashioned camp meeting at the Church of God, at God's Acres in Newark, Ohio

8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer Service
10:00 a.m. Morning Service
10:00 a.m. Children's Service (in the old barn)
3:00 p.m. Teaching Service
5:30 p.m. Youth Prayer Service (youth building)
6:00 p.m. Youth Service (youth building)
7:00 p.m. Evening Service

The saints of God prepare hot, homemade meals in the church dining hall. Meals are reasonably priced. The dining hall will be open for breakfast, lunch, supper, and following the evening services. Rooms, dormitories, book store, and so much more.

We invite you to come, bring your Bible, and hear anointed messages of truth.

**INSPIRATIONAL SINGING ✨ HOLY GHOST PREACHING
DIVINE HEALING ✨ FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SAINTS**

For further information contact:
Pastor Roger L. Decker
Telephone: 740-344-2543
Email: pastor@godsacres.us

UPCOMING MEETINGS

NEWTON, KS
April 8-14

REVIVAL: Church of God, 400 North Meridian Road, Newton, KS 67114
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Services times: Monday-Saturday 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 7 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Brandon R. Gonzalez @ 316-217-2696

MT. PLEASANT, PA
April 20

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Service time: 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation.
MOTELS: Holiday Inn Express, 724-547-2095 (This is on the same road as the church.
Please mention that you are there for the church meeting.) Super 8 Motel in New Stanton,
724-925-8915 (on I-70W, 10 miles north of the church)
For more information, contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey @ 724-547-2151

MT. PLEASANT, PA
April 21-28

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
Service times: Nightly 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation following the service on Sunday. No service both Sunday evenings.
For more information, contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey @ 724-547-2151

SUMMERSVILLE, WV
April 22-28

REVIVAL & FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evening Evangelist: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, OH
Services times: Monday-Thursday 7 p.m.; Friday 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.;
Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Meals will be provided by the local congregation following the services on Friday-Sunday.
For more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047
Website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com
Facebook page: The Church of God, Summersville, WV

AFTON, TN
April 29-May 4

REVIVAL: Church of God at the Barn, 440 Bill Jones Road, Afton, TN 37616
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Service times: 7 p.m. nightly
For more information, contact: Pastor David Shelton @ 423-552-6410

MINERVA, OH
April 29-May 5

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, 13353 Lincoln Street SE, Minerva, OH 44657
Evening Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
Services times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead @ 330-868-1016

WARRENSVILLE, NC
April 29-May 5

REVIVAL: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Rd, Warrenton, NC 28693
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Evangelists: Brother Allen Polston (New Castle, IN) and Brother Mike Miller (Medina, OH)
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Borders @ 336-485-8333 or 740-485-8881



“For where **TWO OR THREE**
are gathered together in my name,

THERE AM I *in the midst of them.”*

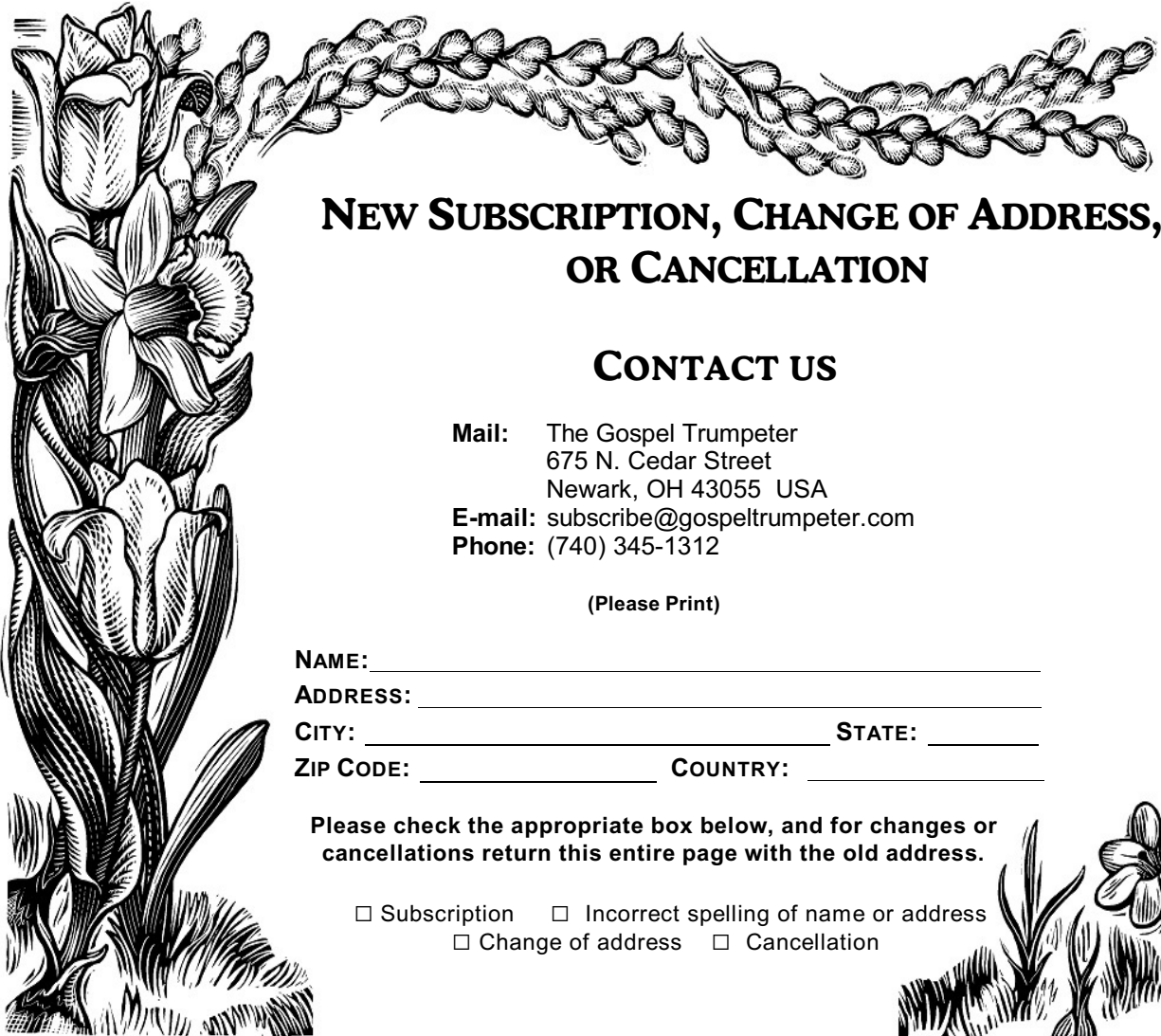
Matthew 18:20

Postman send form 3579 to:

The Gospel Trumpeter

675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055 U.S.A.

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID
AT THE POST OFFICE IN
NEWARK, OH 43055
USPS # 871620



NEW SUBSCRIPTION, CHANGE OF ADDRESS, OR CANCELLATION

CONTACT US

Mail: The Gospel Trumpeter
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, OH 43055 USA
E-mail: subscribe@gospeltrumpeter.com
Phone: (740) 345-1312

(Please Print)

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ **STATE:** _____
ZIP CODE: _____ **COUNTRY:** _____

Please check the appropriate box below, and for changes or cancellations return this entire page with the old address.

- Subscription Incorrect spelling of name or address
- Change of address Cancellation